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## ETHICAL AND CULTURAL FACTORS RELATING TO THE BEHAVIOR AND REACTIONS OF PILOTS IN THE TIME OF BATTLE

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Pilots' performance depends on a multitude of factors. Components like the physical strength of the pilot, his psychology, any special flight conditions are important<sup>1</sup>, but not the only ones. We, also, need to look at the social and cultural factors which are specific to an individual pilot and relate to every nation's customs and traditions, whether religious or of a social nature. These components come into play when orders related to war operations have to be executed. This is the case as, beyond the psychology unique to military officers or soldiers in the battlefield, they act according to their beliefs, for example about whether the war is just or not or whether the order they are about to execute is unjust or illegal (e.g. the bombing of non-military targets)<sup>2</sup>. These traditions influence to a high degree the psychology of pilots and determine to a high extent their reactions and effectiveness. In this context, this paper examines and analyses the different factors that influence how pilots react under battle conditions. We start by briefly presenting the factors we are going to consider. This is followed by the presentation of the questionnaire we will be using for the research – this will be distributed to a significantly large sample of the Hellenic Air Force officers and will be the backbone of the analysis. Finally, we will be presenting the tabulated results and conclude as to whether the cultural background of the officers plays a role in the making of their decisions.

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\* The author acknowledges funding support for this work from "Pythagoras" project, which is co-financed from Op. Education through ESF (European Social Fund) and National Resources.

<sup>1</sup> Ewing, Ross, 2004. *Aviation Medicine and Other Human Factors for Pilots*. Christchurch, New Zealand: Crecy Publishing Ltd, p.p.6-151. Also, Koonce, Jefferson M., 2002. *Human Factors in the Training of Pilots*. London: CRC Press/Taylor & Francis, p.p.1-202.

<sup>2</sup> Osiel, Mark, 2001. *Obedying Orders: Atrocity, Military Discipline, and the Law of War*. Somerset, NJ: Transaction Publishers, p.p.13-159.

## **Methodology of research – Development of the questionnaire**

The factors we wanted to look at in our research is what, in general, we call cultural elements. More specifically, we included – beyond moral parameters and the legal aspects of following orders, factors like marital status, religion, home town and residence town with their special customs, the degree of ‘social education’, any extra degrees or specialisations of the participants. Furthermore, we tried to relate all the information mentioned above with the reality that the officer will face – this is closely related to the type of the plane he is commanding (as this implies different missions) as well as to flight hours and his experience.

In line with these thoughts, we developed a questionnaire divided into three sections, inseparable from one another.

### **Part A: Information Part**

The aim of this part of the questionnaire is to look at the views and perceptions of the officers on the subject in consideration, as well as the influence they received from their studies at the Hellenic Air Force (Hellenic Air Force Academy, Special Officer Schools etc). Beyond their education, we were interested in looking at the degree that Greek history knowledge or novels from the Greek literature or Greek customs influence their behaviour. All these are a form of ‘social education’ that is linked not only to their reactions in the battlefield but to the more generic conception about their services. In parallel, we are trying to look at the influence of financial welfare in handling the high danger rate of their profession, as well as the role of certain services within the Air Force (solicitors, psychologists, military priests) in

solving dilemmas in relation to managing the missions flying officers have to carry out.

### **Part B: Managing dilemmas occurring in the battlefield**

In this part, we are trying to link knowledge and perceptions of flying officers with regards to their profession with the undertaking of certain missions. We are investigating the influence of factors such as religious concepts, the role of family, home town but also the moral and legal framework of conducting war as well as the war doctrine of the country they are serving with regards to carrying out missions.

### **Part C: Interview Part**

This part is also important, as we are getting valuable information about the experience of flying officers, the type of the plane they have specialised in, their marital status, home town as well as any postgraduate knowledge they received after their graduation from the Hellenic Air Force Academy. This information can help us get an insight in answers given for parts A and B.

## **The questionnaire**

At this point, we think it is beneficial to provide the questionnaire we used for conducting our research. We should note here that this is a first effort of collecting, compiling and evaluating the role that various cultural and educational elements have on the performance of flying officers. Further improvements are needed and a more elaborated and specialised research on the subject needs to be carried out – this will be done later on, when the information from the current questionnaires are processed and evaluated.

## Part A: Information Part

1. Our research aims at identifying the factors that Greek Air Force Officers acknowledge to have an influence in their work. What are these factors in your opinion?

- Ø In time of peace?.....  
 Ø In war time?.....

2. Do you believe there are some cultural, moral or any other factors (e.g. history, religious beliefs, origin) that relate to the work you will have to do in a hypothetical war period?

- A) Yes ☐ B) No ☐ C) I am not absolutely sure ☐ D) N/A ☐

3. Have you heard or read anything relative to the influence of moral or cultural factors in the undertaking of duties of Air Force Officers (Greek or any other) in time of war?

- Yes ☐ No (I have not read or heard anything relative) ☐ N/A ☐

4. If yes, what was the source?

	Ü	Do you remember the source in particular?
A Newspaper		
B Television		
Γ Magazine		
Δ Book		
E Movie		
Z Internet		
H Lecture/Seminar/Class/Training		
Θ NGO*		
I Church		
K Leaflet		
Λ Other		
M I heard or read something, but can not recall the source.		

4. [In case you answered YES in question 3]. What was the reason you read that specific article, watched the show on TV, etc?

- A) No reason, just happened ☐ D) Other reason ☐  
 B) I found the topic of interest ☐  
 C) I am always for relevant articles/shows etc as I want to know the latest developments in current subjects. ☐ E) N/A ☐

5. Would you try to find more information about the subject in question?

- A) No, it is of no interest to me ☐  
 B) I am not interested in the subject, but I might occasionally have a look if I find any relevant information ☐  
 C) I will look for relevant information when I get a chance ☐  
 D) I am already collecting information, as it is a subject of particular interest to me ☐  
 E) Not only I am interested in the subject, but I have been involved in a number of committees, conferences and/or research in the relevant area ☐  
 F) I am not sure ☐  
 H) N/A ☐

6. [In case you answered E in question 5] Could you please give us more information about your involvement?

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\* Non-Governmental Organisation.

7. [In case you answered C or D in question 5] Where did you look for and found or where do you plan to look for more information? (tick all applicable sources)

		Can you specify the particular source?
A	Newspapers	
B	Television	
C	Magazines	
D	Books	
E	Movies	
F	Internet	
G	Classes/Seminars/ Training	
H	NGO	
I	Church	
K	Leaflets	
L	Other	

8. [In case you answered A or B in question 5] Why are you not interested in the subject in consideration?

- A) I am simply not interested ☐  
 B) I think it is not important for the undertaking of my duties ☐  
 C) I do not think it has any effect on my performance ☐  
 D) N/A ☐  
 E) Other reason ☐ (Please specify.....)

9. Is there any movie, piece of literature or any specific incident from our History – or other customs of our nation – that have influenced you in your work?

- A) Yes ☐ B) No ☐ C) I am not absolutely sure ☐ D) N/A ☐

If yes, please specify them.

10. Do you believe that air force pilots are influence in carrying out their duties from the current situation in war zones as presented by the media?

- A) Yes ☐ B) No ☐ C) I am not absolutely sure ☐ D) N/A ☐

11. Do you believe that any potential moral/legal responsibilities and the dangerous nature of the profession are in line with remuneration? Does that work as a motive when taking up your duties?

- A) Yes ☐ B) No ☐ C) I am not absolutely sure ☐ D) N/A ☐

In your opinion, would the answer be different in the question above depending on the doctrine (defensive/offensive/pre-emptive war) that a nation has adopted?

12. Do you know the people or the department you can speak to for questions regarding to the moral/legal framework of your work?

- A) Yes ☐ B) No ☐ C) I am not absolutely sure ☐ D) N/A ☐

If yes, who are they?

13. Would it be helpful if there were appointed people from your department in a consultancy role to provide you with answers/help/moral-psychological support and advice for potential problems?

- A) Yes ☐ B) No ☐ C) I am not absolutely sure ☐ D) N/A ☐

14. Do you believe that religion, in general, and military priests, in particular can guide you about issues relating to morality of your services?

- A) Yes ☐ B) No ☐ C) I am not absolutely sure ☐ D) N/A ☐

**15. How important do you think is for this issue to be a core component in officer's education in Air Force?**

- A) Extremely important ☐ D) There are more important issues than that ☐  
 B) Very important ☐ E) Not important at all ☐  
 C) Really important ☐ F) N/A ☐

**PART B: Attitudes against dilemmas in the battlefield**

**16. What is your opinion about the commands relating to undertaking missions?**

- A) We need to always follow them, no exceptions ☐  
 B) They are reviewed within the context they were given and only the *legal* commands are executed ☐  
 C) They are reviewed within the context they were given and only the *legal* commands are executed, however in case there is no time to assess their legality they are immediately executed in order for the mission to succeed. ☐  
 D) N/A ☐

**17. Assuming that in the course of a current 'city war', you are ordered to aim at a target, that cause legal and moral concerns, e.g. a non-military target or a building in a civilian-populated area, what would your reaction be?**

IN CASE OF A DEFENSIVE WAR	IN CASE OF AN OFFENSIVE/PRE-EMPTIVE WAR
A) I would consent and carry them out immediately <input type="checkbox"/> B) I would have asked for written explanation, if there was enough time <input type="checkbox"/> C) I would have asked for oral clarifications <input type="checkbox"/> D) I would not have carried out the mission, been worried about consequences on civilians and the violation of war laws <input type="checkbox"/> E) N/A <input type="checkbox"/> F) I would have acted differently <input type="checkbox"/> (Elaborate..... .....) 	A) I would consent and carry them out immediately <input type="checkbox"/> B) I would have asked for written explanation, if there was enough time <input type="checkbox"/> C) I would have asked for oral clarifications <input type="checkbox"/> D) I would not have carried out the mission, been worried about civilians and the violation of war laws <input type="checkbox"/> E) N/A <input type="checkbox"/> F) I would have acted differently <input type="checkbox"/> (Elaborate..... .....) 

**18. How important as a factor do you think that the culture and cultural elements of the opponent are in determining his choices in the battlefield?**

- A) Extremely important ☐ D) There are more serious factors than this one that determine his choices ☐  
 B) Very important ☐ E) Not important at all ☐  
 C) Really Important ☐ F) N/A ☐

**19. Do you believe that the religious traditions of a nation influence the way it fights?**

- A) Yes ☐ B) No ☐ C) I am not absolutely sure ☐ D) N/A ☐

**20. Do you believe that possible opponents belonging in different cultures and choosing different ways of confronting the opponent (e.g. suicide terrorist attacks and deliberately mixing with civilians) should get no protection from international legislation during the operations?**

- A) International legislation should always be applicable ☐  
 B) They should be protected to the maximum extent, depending on the mission and their position with regards to the factors determining the legal fight ☐  
 C) I would not care about their protection, unless non-combatants are in danger with them ☐  
 D) There are more important issues than that in a war fight ☐  
 E) As long as they choose tactics that are inhuman and harm non-combatants, I do not think that their protection should be a priority issue in confronting them ☐  
 F) N/A ☐

**21. If you knew that during you carry out your mission, non-combatant casualties will happen, how would you react (please tick all relevant answers for your case)?**

IN THE CASE OF A DEFENSIVE WAR	IN THE CASE OF AN OFFENSIVE/PRE-EMPTIVE WAR
A) I would have carried out my mission, considering it is legal. I am not interested in side casualties, as I received orders to go ahead with the current missions. <input type="checkbox"/> B) I do not think I will do anything specific, as I do not know what I could do. <input type="checkbox"/> C) I will not do anything specific, as I am afraid of the consequences. <input type="checkbox"/> D) I will not do anything specific, as this is not possible in the context of military hierarchy. <input type="checkbox"/> E) I will try to reduce side casualties to the smaller possible number when carrying out the mission <input type="checkbox"/> F) I will share my concerns with my colleagues. <input type="checkbox"/> G) I will discuss my concerns with my superiors. <input type="checkbox"/> H) I will do something else. <input type="checkbox"/> I) N/A <input type="checkbox"/>	A) I would have carried out my mission, considering it is legal. I am not interested in side casualties, as I received orders to go ahead with the current missions. <input type="checkbox"/> B) I do not think I will do anything specific, as I do not know what I could do. <input type="checkbox"/> C) I will not do anything specific, as I am afraid of the consequences. <input type="checkbox"/> D) I will not do anything specific, as this is not possible in the context of military hierarchy. <input type="checkbox"/> E) I will try to reduce side casualties to the smaller possible number when carrying out the mission <input type="checkbox"/> F) I will share my concerns with my colleagues. <input type="checkbox"/> G) I will discuss my concerns with my superiors. <input type="checkbox"/> h) I will do something else. <input type="checkbox"/> I) N/A <input type="checkbox"/>

**22. [If you answered H in question 21]. Could you give us more details?**

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**23. What is your opinion on the violent acts that happened from time to time against war prisoners?**

- A) Unacceptable, prisoners should be protected, exactly as international legislation states ☐  
B) They could be partly justified under certain conditions, e.g. when they relate to obtaining information of high military value. ☐  
C) N/A ☐  
D) Other ☐ (Elaborate.....)

**24. Do your religious beliefs play any role in carrying out your duties (especially in the battlefield)?**

- A) Yes ☐ B) No ☐ C) I am not absolutely sure ☐ D) N/A ☐

**25. Do you believe that your marital status (e.g. married with children) would influence you in carrying out an operational mission that might result in losing your life?**

- A) Yes ☐ B) No ☐ C) I am not absolutely sure ☐ D) ΔΓ/ΔΑ ☐

**26. Do you believe that your home town, the way that you grew up with its special customs or your family traditions influence the way you think about your duties?**

- A) Yes ☐ B) No ☐ C) I am not absolutely sure ☐ D) ΔΓ/ΔΑ ☐

**27. Do you think that experience is important in your job? Have you observed that it can help in solving moral/legal dilemmas?**

- A) Yes ☐ B) No ☐ C) I am not absolutely sure ☐ D) ΔΓ/ΔΑ ☐

**28. Do you believe that been educated about and discussing dilemmas that might arise in an armed conflict can help in identifying and resolving them faster (and, as a result, increases your efficiency)?**

- A) Yes ☐ B) No ☐ C) I am not absolutely sure ☐ D) ΔΓ/ΔΑ ☐

**29. Do you believe that the operational doctrine (defensive/offensive/pre-emptive war) is possible to influence the making of decisions in the case of ethical dilemmas and the conduct of operations?**

- A) Yes ☐ B) No ☐ C) I am not absolutely sure ☐ D) N/A ☐

Please elaborate on your answer, if you wish to do so.

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### PART C: INTERVIEWEE WORK DETAILS

You work in:	A) WAR SQUADRON <input type="checkbox"/> B) TRAINING SQUADRON <input type="checkbox"/> Γ) SQUADRON OF TRANSPORT PLANES <input type="checkbox"/> Δ) SQUADRON HELICOPTERS <input type="checkbox"/>
Gender	
Age/Years of Service	...../..... .....
Education (Bachelor(s), Postgraduate and Doctoral level studies)	
Family Status	
Children (number, age and gender of the children)	
Home Town	



## Results of the Survey

First of all, it is important to note that until now we have evaluated 156 questionnaires that have been returned from both war as well as educational squadrons. Our sample consists of men whose age range between 22 and 45 years. The research is still in progress, though, and in the coming months we would be able to present the entire set of results.

### Part A: Information Part

In this section we get a number of interesting information. In relation to the factors that influence the operations of flying officers (as they evaluate them), we get:

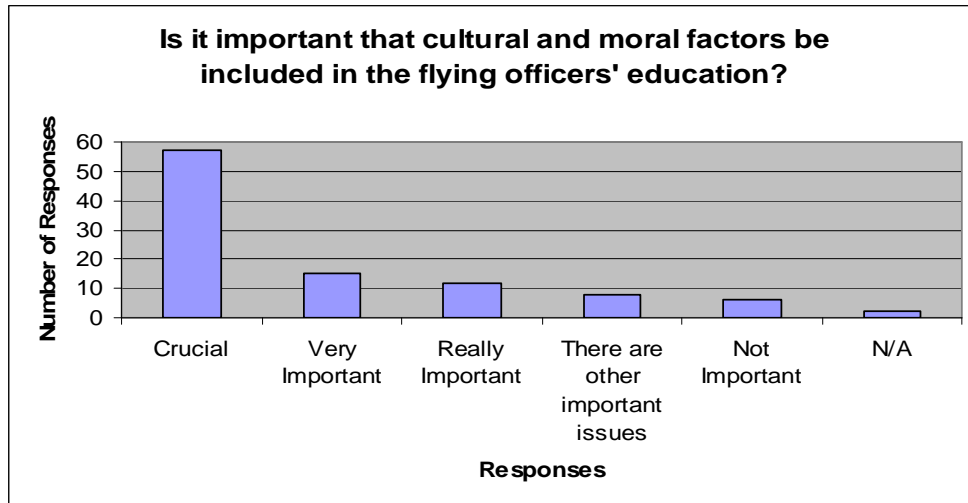
- in time of peace, the social status of the officer, his services to the country, the people's opinion, any special circumstances in the squadron where the officers are serving, attachment to their colleagues, the extended socio-political environment, their remuneration, their origin, the way they were brought up, their 'social education', the help and support they get from family, the religion, the trust – or not – that people have in the army forces, special psychological and organic parameters (stress, health status of each flying officer etc)
- in time of war: moral inhibitions, the perception of serving the country, the ideal of liberty, the legal aspects of each mission, any special circumstances and the necessity of each mission, the doctrine of the country with regards to justifying war, certain psychological and organic parameters (stress, health status of each flying officer etc)

A large percentage of the sample (93%) believes that moral and cultural factors influence their services at war – 5% think this is not the case and a 2% do not want to answer the question (or do not know). The sources of their information on the subject are mainly the modules provided by the Hellenic Air Force Academy as well as other postgraduate officer schools (41%), whereas 26% found information in books, a 3% used religious sources, 12% draw inspiration from movies, a 10% collected information from the Internet, 4% are using TV and the newspapers for information and, finally, 4% do not remember the source.

In their vast majority (68%) the officers completing the questionnaire looked for more information because they found the topic interesting, a 15% 'confessed' to randomly finding the material, whilst 12% are always for more material on the subject; there is a remaining 5% that did not specify the reason why they searched for relevant material for the subject in consideration. A high percentage (62%) will try and keep up-to-date for relevant issues, followed by a 19% saying that they might occasionally look for material and an even smaller percentage (7%) that has carried out some research, a 10% that have no intention of researching the subject and a 2% that does not know or do not want to answer. By looking at those who are not interested in finding more information, the majority (59%) think it is not important for their service, a 27% thinks that it is not influencing their performance and the remaining 14% is simply not interested for these matters. Those who are interested intend to collect information from the Internet (963%), books (19%) and lectures/modules/seminars (912%) and magazines (6%). We should note that 94% is influenced by the Greek history, our nation customs, literature pieces of work and movies, a 3% is not certain that this is not the case and another 3% does not know or does not want to answer. Furthermore, a 82% is not influenced by how media present the news, a minority of 11% seems to be influenced and 7% does not know/does not answer. Finally, in their vast majority (98%), flying officers believe that their remuneration is not in line with the danger degree of their profession (the remaining 2% do not know/ do not want to answer).

There is some confusion as to where those officers interested in further analysing a dilemma can go: 46% say they do not know where to go, 23% are not sure, an 18% do not know/ do not answer and only 13% say they do not know who is responsible for that. The role of consultants for service dilemmas is welcomed by 61%, 33% think they would be of no help to them and the remaining 5% is not sure for their effectiveness and 1% do not know / do not answer. The help received from military priests is positively received by 64% of the officers and the remaining 36% think they can not get any help from the church.

The subject under consideration is judged as extremely important to be included in the education of flying officers by 57% of the sample, very important by 15%, really important by 12%, 8% think there are more important issues, 6% knows nothing about it and 2% do not know / do not answer.



**Part B: managing dilemmas occurring in the battlefield.**

According to 13% of the officers been questioned, only legal orders are been executed – however, when there is no time all orders. On the other hand, 78% think that orders have to be executed for the good of the army, 7% think that orders should be carried out always with no exceptions and 2% do not know / do not answer.

In the case of facing dilemmas with respect to the target:

§ in defensive war, 69% would ask for oral clarifications, 14% would ask for clarifications in writing, 12% would carry out the order immediately, 2% do not know / do not answer and 1% would act in a different way (without specifying how).

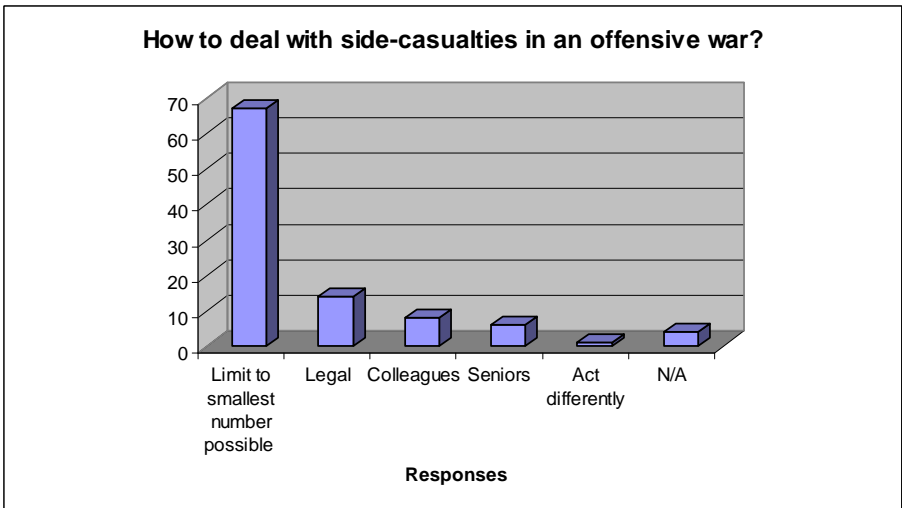
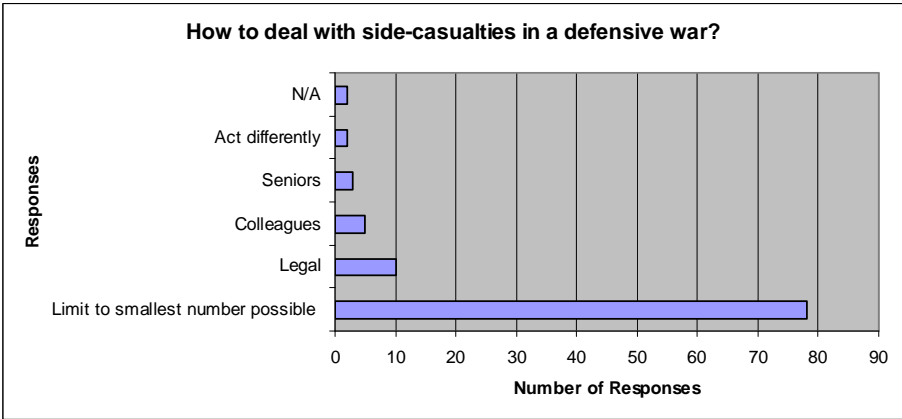
§ in offensive or pre-emptive war 48% would ask for oral clarifications, 37% for clarifications in writing, 6% would act on the mission immediately, 5% would not have carried out the mission and 4% do not know / do not answer.



The cultural elements of the opponent play a very important role for their choices in the battlefield for 81% of the sample – they play an extremely important role for 9%, for 4% a very important role, while 4% think there are more important parameters than that, 1% think that cultural factors play no role and 1% do not know / do not answer. Religious beliefs influence the way a nation fights according to 83% of the officers filling the questionnaire, while those who negate that is 12% - on the other hand 3% is not certain about that and 2% do not know / do not answer. International legislation should apply to any opponent according to 91%, 3% believe they should be protected to the biggest possible extent, 2% believe they should be protected only if non-combatants were in danger as well; 3% believe that if the opponent is following inhuman tactics then they lose their rights to protection and 1% believe there are more serious issues than that in an armed conflict.

With regards to collateral damage as a result of the mission, we can report the following

- § in the case of a defensive war, the majority (78%) would try to limit them to the smallest possible number, 10% would carry out the order considering it legal, 5% would have discussed it with their colleagues, 3% with their senior officers, 2% do not know / do not answer and 2% would act in a different way without specifying any more details
- § in the case of an offensive or a pre-emptive war the majority (67%) would try to limit them to the smallest possible number, 14% would have carried out the mission considering it as legal, 8% would have discussed it with their colleagues, 6% would have discussed it with their senior officers, 4% do not know / do not answer and 1% would have acted in a different way without specifying how



In relation to treatment of war prisoners, an index of cultural superiority from ancient times<sup>3</sup>, the majority think violent acts against them are unacceptable (96%), 3% partly justifies them for reasons of military necessity and 1% do not know/ do not answer

Religious beliefs play a role for carrying out the duties of flying officers for 7%, while for 88% it plays no role (5% do not know/ do not answer). The marital status plays a role in carrying out their duties for 17% of the officers, while for 75% it plays no role (8% do not know/ do not answer). The home town of the officer in carrying out their duties plays a role for 58% of the officers, while for 36% it plays no role (6% do not know/ do not answer). Experience is considered important for solving dilemmas for 77% of the officers, 10% is uncertain for that, 5% do not know/ do not answer and 8% answers in the negative. Training is considered important for solving dilemmas for 64%, 28% are uncertain, 7% do not know/ do not answer and 1% answer in the negative. Finally, the war doctrine (defensive-offensive-pre-emptive war) is considered an important parameter for 92% of those questioned, 4% are uncertain, 3% do not know/ do not answer and 1% does not look at it as a determinant factor.

### **Part C: Interview Part.**

The interview part of the questionnaire provides us with important evidence, as we observe that experience influences the responses that officers provide. More specifically, officers undergoing training and new officers (up to five years of service) put more emphasis on moral and cultural factors, while the more experienced ones are more concerned with the welfare of the squadron and the effectiveness of missions and operations. Furthermore, those who received training in issues of International legislation or have a Law degree are more sensitive in issues relating to observing relevant laws and statutes. The home town of the officer influences mainly those who come from Crete, Mani and Larisa. Finally, it comes as a surprise that as years in service and experience increase, marital status and having children influence less the officers [despite that in these ages, the vast majority (93%) are married with children].

### **Conclusions**

This research brings into light important evidence concerning factors that influence the undertaking of duties by flying officers and that have not been investigated in depth. Some of these factors are the

moral, cultural, social factors that we attempted to look at. It is clear, from the statistical evidence supplied in this work, that these factors have a very important, sometimes crucial, role to play in the way flying officers think and act.

As the research is in its early stages and the processing of data is not complete yet, we expect to be in a position to present combinatorial statistics to questions from parts A and B that are closely related to each other and are certainly influenced by information in part C. As for future research, we want to look at additional, more specialised research in order to better understand their role, as well as demonstrating the importance of education and preparation of the officers for dealing with the dilemmas in the battlefield in a more effective and efficient way.

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### **About the Author**

**Joanne K. Lekea** (BA Athens, MSc Athens, PhD Athens) holds a BA (Hons) in Ancient and Classical Greek Studies with a specialization in Classical Literature (1999) from the University of Athens, an MSc (with distinction) in History and Philosophy of Sciences and Technology and a Ph.D. (with distinction) in Military Ethics awarded jointly by the University of Athens and the National Technical University of Athens (NTUA). In her MSc project thesis, she looked at the historical and theoretical approaches to just war theory. Her doctoral research involved looking at humanitarian interventions from the viewpoint of just war theory. Her research interests include - but are not limited to - the Just War Theory, International Humanitarian Law, Military Ethics, Humanitarian Interventions and Terrorism. She works as a visiting lecturer with the Hellenic Air Force Academy and is also a post-doctor researcher and a visiting lecturer with the University of Athens.

<sup>3</sup> Christopher, Paul, 1999. *The Ethics of War and Peace: an introduction to legal and moral issues*. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc., p.p.7-103.